

Invisible or Fly?

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Summary: In ILTY, Lois asked Clark which he'd prefer: to be invisible or to fly....

## Invisible or Fly?

"When I was a kid, Lucy and I used to play this game. We'd ask each other, what would you rather do, fly or be invisible?"

Clark stilled as his heart almost stopped; what was Lois up to? Was she trying to tell him subtly that she knew who he was? He stole a quick glance at her as she stood next to him on his balcony, but she was cupping the tea he'd made her in both hands, her gaze unfocused as she was clearly remembering her childhood games. Maybe this was a complete coincidence?

Playing for time, he asked, "And you chose?"

"Mmm, invisible. I wished I could walk through all those closed doors. I guess I still do," she replied reflectively.

That made sense, Clark thought. Ever insatiably curious, his new colleague. Lois only had to hear the words 'secret' or 'confidential' for her to want to know all about it. What would she say, he wondered, if she knew that he could at least \*see\* through all those closed doors she mentioned?

He was enjoying this conversation, this brief interlude in their busy work day, and the fact that Lois was talking to him as if he was a friend, someone she liked, instead of an annoying newbie who'd been forced on her by their editor. In an attempt to prolong the discussion, he asked, "And what do you think you'd find there behind all those closed doors?"

Her lips curved into a soft smile, her thoughts clearly elsewhere - perhaps focused on some childhood memories of a magical place closed off to her. "Mmm, I don't know. Something different, wonderful. Something I don't have, can't have. So, what about you?"

The change of topic and emphasis took him by surprise, and he frowned slightly. "What?"

"Invisible or fly?" she prompted.

He grimaced inwardly; if only she knew! Certainly not invisibility; he'd had enough of feeling himself invisible over the past couple of weeks. As he'd told his parents only the other day, he felt as if he was losing himself to the man in the blue, red and yellow suit. Clark Kent was simply fading away, and Superman was taking over. Even Lois - who, admittedly, had practically swooned over Superman the first time she'd seen him - owned a pair of Superman pyjamas, and she'd been prepared to give up her savings to buy a 'date' with the man. Yet when Superman's alter ego, Clark Kent, had come to sit beside her after the auction, she'd barely known he was there.

No, Clark had had enough of feeling invisible. Now, flying on the other hand... oh, there was simply nothing like it. To soar above the clouds, to float on his back and bask in the sun, to experience the sense of freedom which propelling himself through the air gave him - if he lost his powers tomorrow, the one he would miss most would be the ability to fly.

He smiled; he had absolutely no hesitation. "Fly," he told her.

Her eyes widened. "Really?"

"Yeah," he murmured.

Moving closer to him, her expression softened and she said teasingly, "You know, I never thought I would say this, Clark, but you and I have something in common."

"What's that?" he asked, thinking that as far as he was concerned he could think of any number of things, but that for Lois to admit the fact was astonishing.

She moved closer still. "Superman. You want to fly like him, and I want to fly with him." To his utter amazement, she laid her head on his shoulder.

Superman again. That was his first thought, and briefly he tensed; could he ever persuade her to forget the comic-book character in the silly cape and focus on \*him,\* the real guy who was standing next to her?

But then his increased heart-rate reminded him of what was really happening here. Whatever Lois might say about Superman, she was in \*his\* apartment, on \*his\* balcony drinking tea with him, and she had voluntarily put her head on \*his\* shoulder. Experimentally, he shifted a little closer to her; she didn't move. So he brought up his arm and laid it lightly, casually around her shoulders. Again, she didn't move; she didn't say anything either, but he took her silence as tacit consent.

"Have you flown with Superman, Clark?" she asked a few moments later.

He hesitated briefly, wondering how best to answer, then decided to

be as honest as he could. "I've flown with him, yes."

"It's such a fantastic feeling, isn't it?" Her voice was dreamy. "Being held in his arms... well, okay, I guess that wouldn't do anything for you, would it? But the feel of the air rushing past, seeing everything below look so tiny, but knowing he won't let you fall, he'll keep you safe... oh, it was the most fantastic experience of my life! And... I'd love to do it again."

"You would?" Clark asked her softly, his heart in his mouth.

"Oh yes. Oh, Clark, you don't know just how much!"

He reminded himself to breathe, then spoke carefully. "So, Lois, if I could fly, you'd fly with me? It doesn't have to be Superman, I mean, does it?"

"Clark?" This time she raised her head from his shoulder and opened her eyes, gazing at him with a puzzled expression. "Come on - you can't fly!" Raising her eyebrow in an exaggerated gesture, she made it clear that she was humouring him. "Okay, well, I guess that if some miracle happened and you somehow got Superman's ability to fly, I suppose I would fly with you. As long as I could trust you not to drop me, I mean."

She moved away, and Clark let his arm drop to his side. "Clark, what's this all about?" she asked him, her tone a little impatient. "Are you jealous of Superman or something? Because... because all the things he can do make you feel... oh, I don't know...."

"Inadequate?" Clark suggested. "Is that what you meant?"

She flushed. "I don't know. Maybe."

Wondering why he was torturing himself like this, Clark narrowed his eyes and gazed at her. "Should I feel inadequate, Lois?"

"No, of course not, Clark!" she told him impatiently. "Look, Superman is... well, he's just not like anyone else. No-one can match up to the things he does, so you shouldn't even think about trying to compete. And anyway, you're pretty okay as you are," she added slowly, almost reluctantly.

"I am?" he asked her softly.

She swallowed and nodded. "I know I've been mean to you sometimes, Clark, but I really do think you're a nice guy. I... I like you," she added awkwardly.

"I like you too, Lois," he replied, his gaze fixed on her face; she flushed, embarrassed, and took a sip of tea.

"We should go in - we have a story to get back to," she said abruptly.

But Clark stepped closer to her again, blocking her route to the door. "Wait a second, Lois," he urged quietly.

"What?"

"Well... you said you'd fly with me. You meant it, didn't you?"

She glared at him. "Clark! You can't fly, so what's the point of this? Come on, let's go."

"In a minute," he insisted, wrapping his arm about her shoulder again. "Lois, I want to show you something."

"What?" she asked again, impatiently. "And, Clark, why do you keep touching me? I don't need your arm.... What are you doing?"

He was leading her towards the edge of the balcony. "It's okay, Lois, trust me," he told her with a reassuring smile. She eyed him warily.

Gripping her hand then, he stepped lightly up onto the balcony rail. "Come on, stand beside me," he told her.

"Clark, what are you *doing*?" she demanded. "Get down from there - you'll fall, and then.... Come *on*," she insisted, tugging on his hand. He didn't move.

"Clark, you're crazy!" she yelled at him.

He smiled at her. "Maybe I am. Do you want to find out?" As she glared at him, he grinned. "Come on, Lois, where's your sense of adventure?"

"Where's your sanity?" she threw back at him.

"But, Lois, what if I'm right? What if I *can* fly?" he asked her. "Don't you want to find out?"

"Clark, you really are insane!" she growled. "I'm going - let go of my hand!" Tugging hard, she tried to pull her hand from his grasp, but he wouldn't release her.

"Lois, come and stand here beside me," he invited softly. "Trust me, you won't fall. I promise."

She raised her gaze to his face; their eyes met and held.

"Trust me," he murmured again.

"I...." She began to say something, but trailed off. Almost as if in a dream, she took one step, then two, and a moment later she was standing unsteadily on the rail beside Clark. He gripped her around the waist, holding her firmly.

"Lois, I can't grant you your first wish," he told her softly.

"W-what?" She blinked at him.

"I can't make you invisible," he explained. "But if you want to fly...."

Holding her gaze with his, he stepped off the rail, propelling her with him by the presence of his arm around her waist. She screamed as

she felt the ground give way beneath her, then screamed again as she realised they were being propelled upwards.

"Clark... you really are flying!" she gasped a few moments later.

Laughing, he gazed down at her. "Yes, I am. And you said you'd fly with me...."

"I... I guess I am," she said shakily. "Clark... I don't understand. How... how can you...?"

"Just a minute," he replied, guiding them to the roof of his apartment. He descended lightly so that Lois could find her footing without losing her balance, then stood watching her, waiting for realisation to dawn.

He saw her swallow, then look down at the roof beneath them, then over the edge to the balcony of his apartment below them. "Clark... I'm not dreaming, am I?"

"No."

"And... we're really standing on your roof?"

"Yes."

"And... you really just flew me up here?"

"Yes."

"And... I've really made a fool of myself over the last few weeks, haven't I?" she concluded, her expression shame-faced as she dropped her gaze to the ground.

"How?" he asked her carefully, surprised at this reaction. He'd expected her to be mad.

"Because I'm supposed to be the best damned reporter in Metropolis and I couldn't even recognise a farmboy in a ski suit!" she flung at him.

He gave her a rueful smile. "How many farmboys have you seen in ski suits lately, Lois?"

She grinned in return. "Not many, I guess." She took a step closer to him. "You know, you really do look different in that suit, Clark."

"So my mom tells me," he answered, smiling.

"So... why tell me? And why now?" Her expression seemed to suggest that she felt privileged, rather than deceived; Clark thought with delight that it seemed his spur-of-the-moment impulse had been a good idea after all.

"I guess I wanted you to know," he replied, considering. "And... well, I love to fly, and when you asked me that question, and you told me you loved to fly with Superman... well, I just couldn't resist."

"How you must have laughed when I virtually accused you of feeling inadequate next to him!" she murmured, embarrassed.

But he took a step closer to her. "Lois, you wouldn't believe me if I told you what I was really thinking," he assured her. "Look, would you like to go flying?"

"Really? We can?" He almost laughed aloud at her excited expression.

"Sure. Just let me change." He was about to spin, but she quickly walked towards him.

"Clark - not yet," she said, forestalling him. Her hand reached up to pull his glasses off his face, then she looped her other hand around his neck. "I just want to know... I mean, that other time, in the plane, we had other things on our mind, like the fact that we were going to be killed, but I couldn't believe how good...." She stopped speaking, tugging his head down, then an instant later her lips were pressed to his and she was kissing him passionately.

Once he'd recovered from the shock, Clark wrapped his arms around her, holding her warm body close to his as he returned her kiss with all the enthusiasm he had put into that first kiss, and more. He heard her moan deep in her throat, and he daringly slipped his tongue forward to touch her lips with it.

"Lois... oh, Lois, I've wanted to do this for so long...."

"Clark... why did I ever pretend I wasn't attracted to you?" she murmured as they pulled apart.

He stroked her hair almost reverently as he gazed at her. "Um... you still want to fly?"

She nodded; in a split second he was in the Suit and she was in his arms. Holding her more closely against his chest than he'd dared to before, he took off and flew them both high above Metropolis, Lois clinging to him with her head on his shoulder. This was how he had longed to fly ever since he'd met this woman; he'd dreamed of carrying her in his arms and taking her to all his favourite places, or even just drifting above the clouds with her resting on his chest. That would be just... wonderful....

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Slowly Clark opened his eyes; he was still floating above the clouds over Metropolis. His hand reached down to his chest, and met the fabric of his Suit. He was alone.

How he wished he'd had the courage to show Lois that he really could fly when she'd challenged him like that. Instead, when she'd said they should go, he had meekly followed her back through the door into his kitchen.

What would she have done if he really had jumped up onto the balcony rail? What if he had pulled her up there beside him, and then jumped off and flown with her? He didn't know. But something told him that

it probably hadn't been the right thing to do. Not yet, at any rate. She would probably have been really embarrassed to discover that she'd been making a fool of herself over someone who was in reality the partner she sometimes treated with amused contempt. She would certainly have been angry with herself - and him - for having been deceived.

No, he had done the right thing by going back into the apartment with her, he decided. And the brief interlude hadn't altogether been a waste of time, he realised, remembering. She had told him she liked him! She thought he was 'pretty okay' as he was!

Well, if Lois liked him, then there was hope for him yet. He would wait, bide his time, and maybe one of these days she would smile at him the way she did at Superman, and maybe he would be able to take her flying with him.

Until then, he would have to settle for being - well, not invisible, but perhaps less noticeable than he'd like to be. And Lois would just have to wait for that flight with Superman; no pleasure flights until he was ready to tell her the truth, he resolved suddenly.

Then... then she might just come to prefer flying to invisibility!

- The End -

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